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*S. V. Hosmer from the Author*

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# HISTORICAL ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST

IN

NORTH COVENTRY, CONN.

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AT THEIR FIRST

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION,

October 9, 1845.

By GEORGE A. CALHOUN,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

HARTFORD:

PRESS OF CASE, TIFFANY & BURNHAM,  
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The following Address, published at their request, is affectionately dedicated to the Church of Christ in North Coventry, by the Author.

COVENTRY, Oct. 10th, 1845.



## ADDRESS.

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THE origin and annals of a small religious community, in a retired country parish, can present but few incidents to interest the feelings, or attract the attention of the multitude. And the event which we are assembled to commemorate has been deemed worthy of but an obscure place in history. Few, very few have been made acquainted with the fact, that on the 8th day of October 1745, a church of Christ was organized in this place, and that on the day following Rev. Nathan Strong was ordained their pastor. But however trivial the celebration of a church's birth-day, and the calling to remembrance the virtues and deeds of our ancestors may appear to some, your coming together, my friends, bespeaks an interest in the present occasion. And grateful are we, who here statedly worship the God of our fathers, that we are allowed the privilege of meeting at this time so many of our acquaintance from other churches and congregations. We welcome them to a participation with us in the mutual greetings, grateful recollections, and religious sympathies of the occasion. We rejoice in this favorable opportunity once more, within these consecrated walls, of mingling in devotional services with those from abroad, who are natives of this place, or who were once members of this congregation. We welcome them to the sanctuary, the homes, and the sepulchres of their fathers and early associates. And with pleasure we anticipate the privilege of again welcoming many of them to the table of our common Lord.

And, my honored father,\* we thank God, that he has permitted you to approach so near to your centennary, and has granted you strength to be here and to aid your brethren in commemorating events and deeds of past generations. May your long protracted life and usefulness be continued; and when, in God's good time, you are called to follow your generation to the world of spirits, may you then be engaged with the general assembly of the church of the first born in celebrating that great event on which rest all our hopes of salvation.

What though we have not, in referring to the commencement and continuance of a church of Christ, mighty deeds and wonderful providences to notice; is it useless to commemorate a church's birth-day, contemplate the characters and doings of its members, and meditate on the dealings of God with them? God directed his people, by religious observances, to celebrate the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, the promulgation of the law at Mount Sinai, the death and resurrection of Christ, and other events. He would have these events retained in memory, and brought from time to time distinctly to the view of succeeding generations, that they might be under the conservative influence of such contemplations. And many, very many of the disasters which befall the churches of Christ result from a disregard to the experience and wisdom of former ages. And let the circumstances and principles in which our churches were established be known and duly appreciated; let the virtues and self-sacrificing acts of our fathers be imitated; and let God's faithfulness to them be prayerfully considered; and in both civil and religious communities there will be more stability, more subordination to needful authority, more of the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and more of the fear of God. If then we would seek our best interests, we must know, as an eloquent

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\*Rev. Samuel Nott of Franklin, in the ninety-third year of his age, and the sixty-fifth of his ministry, who was present in compliance with a special invitation.

writer observes,\* “ the character of our ancestry, the principles of their early training, the perilous or prosperous passages of their course, on what rocks they were in danger of foundering, through what straits they with difficulty ran, to what causes are owing the more peculiar features of their moral being, the events which awakened their energies and developed their resources, and, in short, all the diversified experiences of their past life. By tracing the stream from its source downward, by observing the occurrences which follow each other in regular sequence, we are enabled to discern those more recondite causes, and those more secret springs of action, whence have flowed events universally admitted it may be, yet hitherto unexplained, or but very partially understood.”

And is there not something in our natures, which we shall do well to cherish, that prompts us to improve occasions like the present? What person of common sensibility is there, who has no interest in visiting the place of his birth, the scenes of his youthful adventure, the valleys, hills, mountains, and streams where, with the joyous hope and buoyant spirit of childhood he roamed; the dwelling in which he was nurtured with the care of a solicitous father, and the love of a fond mother; the school house in which, while associated with some who are dead, and with others who are afar off, he was taught the rudiments of learning; and the fields and groves where he indulged in childish sports and commenced the labors and toils of life? Who is there that has not an interest—an interest it may be “ both pleasant and painful to the soul”—in calling to mind early associations and early associates? And is he worthy of our respect and esteem, who does not manifest a regard and reverence for his ancestry? We love to gaze at the portraits of our parents, refer to their precepts, tell of their deeds, and speak of their virtues. For their sakes, we love to survey anew the habitations which they occupied, the buildings and lands which they possessed and where they

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\* Rev. Adam Reid.



labored ; the roads which they were accustomed to travel ; the sanctuary where they worshipped ; and the cemetery where they were interred. We love to possess articles of their construction ; remains of their furniture ; specimens of their attires, their autographs, their favorite books, and their bibles. And we love to trace up the line of our descent, contemplate the circumstances, characters, and acts of our progenitors, until it is lost in the obscurity of the past. And what if they were not of noble birth ; what though their deeds were not published by the trumpet of fame ; what if their names are not enrolled on the page of history with those of heroes and statesmen ; what if they were never associated with the wealthy, the learned, or the great ; *they are our ancestors* ; as such we respect and revere them, and are interested in what relates to them. And although the providence of God has allotted us our homes and the scenes of our operations in a region undistinguished, and we are the descendants of those who pursued the ordinary walks of life ; we trust our commemoration of this church's organization will not be altogether uninteresting or unprofitable.

This religious community was, for about thirty years, embraced in what is now denominated, the First Church and Society in Coventry : and it is needful that I commence the account of God's dealings with this people by referring to events which transpired previous to the existence of two churches in this town.

In his History of Connecticut, Trumbull says : " A township had been given several years before this time (1711,) by Joshua, Sachem of the Mohegans, lying north of Lebanon and west of Mansfield, to certain legatees in Hartford. The donation was approved by the General Assembly. The legatees conveyed their right to William Pitkin, Joseph Talcott, Willam Whiting and Richard Lord, to be a committee to lay out said township, and settle on the lands. On the 9th of May 1706, the General Assembly authorized those gentlemen as a committee for those purposes. October 11, 1711, this committee was re-appointed, with one

Nathaniel Rust, who had already settled on the lands, more effectually to carry into execution the designs of their former appointment. The township at the same session was named Coventry. Nathaniel Rust and some others settled in the town about the year 1700; but the settlement of it has generally been dated from 1709. In the spring of this year, a number of good householders, from Northampton and other places, moved into the town, and the inhabitants were so increased in about two years, that they were incorporated with the privileges of other towns. The families were from a great variety of places, but principally from Northampton and Hartford."

Curiosity naturally leads us to inquire; what deeds were acted by human beings, within the present limits of this town, previous to Nathaniel Rust's coming here in 1700? The Pequots were the rightful lords of our hills and valleys, our lake and streams of water; and after them the Mohegans. And often, in former days, the arrow head of the Indian's bow, his rude stone axe, and other weapons and implements were found in our fields. How came they there? How were they used? Were these the weapons of the chieftain employed in bloody conflict with other human beings? or were they those of the Indian engaged in the chase? They are the memorials of a race of men now almost extinct in New England.

A direct and authentic tradition has brought down to us the following story of the Indians in this town. There was a village of savages in the valley of Hop River, not far from the place now possessed and occupied by Mr. Cyril Parker. Mr. Monroe (on the town records, Merough) the first occupant of Mr. Parker's place was largely engaged in trapping, and the Indians purloined his game. Repeatedly he complained to the chief, who was an honest man; and finally he informed the chief, that he would kill the first Indian he found stealing from his traps. The chief gave his consent to the deed, saying he did not wish such a person to live among his people. Early one morning Mr. Monroe saw an Indian taking an otter from one of his traps;

he shot him and with haste buried him under the wall of his house. On reflection he became greatly alarmed in consequence of his rash deed, expecting the Indians would seek revenge; but they soon after abandoned their village and emigrated to some other part of the country. Not many years since, on removing the walls of that dwelling, the bones of this Indian were found.

In the early settlement of this parish, there were indications of there having been an Indian village on the plain, now possessed by Capt. Flavel Case; and that plain, in later years, has been fruitful of Indian relics.

At the period of the settlement of Coventry, if we, as is common, date the settlement from 1709, there were but two towns in what is now the county of Tolland—Mansfield and Hebron. The former was settled in 1703, and the latter in 1704. Trumbull informs us, that at its settlement Coventry was bounded on the east by Mansfield, and on the south by Lebanon; and it appears from other sources of information, that it was bounded on the west by Hartford, and that the present town of Bolton was then denominated, “Hartford Mountain.”

Here was the field, which infinite wisdom selected for planting and perpetuating, through succeeding generations, a church of Christ, in which many should be prepared for heaven, and a branch of which we have received as an inheritance from our fathers. As the first settlers of this town, Providence elected those from Northampton, Essex County Mass., Hartford and other places, who inherited the virtues of their Puritan fathers. Men of principle, of conscience, and of the fear of God. Men, who would not rear up a community without a recognition of their dependence on God and obligations to serve him. Men, who were willing to labor and suffer for the purpose of securing for themselves and descendants the blessings of a stated ministry of the gospel. Would that their example in this particular, were universally followed by their descendants. Would that a voice might be heard and regarded by all the dwellers on these hills and in these valleys, saying;



Look at your fathers. Drink into the spirit of your fathers. Prize the institutions of religion as did your fathers. And estimate the favor of God as did your fathers.

So soon as a considerable number of families became inhabitants of this town measures were adopted for establishing the institutions of religion.

Mr. Joseph Meacham, a young gentleman from Enfield, and probably a graduate of Harvard University, commenced preaching here as early as 1713, four years after the first settlement of the town. The first vote on the town records, indeed the third recorded vote of the town, is as follows;—“Coventry 4th of January 1713–14. At a legal town meeting, the town then voted to have Mr. Meacham ordain as soon as they can conveniently after the next General Court.”\* At the time when this vote was passed, no church had been organized, and it was not then customary to form a church till the way was prepared for the ordination of the first Pastor. The First Church in Coventry was organized, and Rev. Joseph Meacham was ordained their Pastor, October, 1714.† The church, at its formation, was composed of ten members. No records are found informing us who constituted the ordaining council, or who preached the ordination sermon.

Soon after his ordination Mr. Meacham was married to Miss Esther Williams, daughter of Rev. John Williams of Deerfield, Mass., whose wife and infant child were murdered, and he and most of his children were taken captive to Canada by the Indians. A brother of Mr. Meacham was the first Pastor of the first church in Mansfield. Mr. Meacham had ten children, four sons and six daughters. One daughter and all his sons died in early life. One daughter married Dr. John Rose of Coventry, grandfather of the late

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\* Until the division of the town into two parishes, ecclesiastical business of a pecuniary nature was transacted in town meetings.

† Authority for this date is derived from the town records, and from a document, which was put into the possession of Mr. Prince of Boston, probably by Mr. Meacham. Clearly these transactions could not have taken place, as has been published, in 1712; or in 1713.

Capt. Joseph and Major Nathan Hale Rose. One married a Mr. Fuller of Mansfield, descendants of whom are now residing in that town. One married a Mr. Grant, who resided on "Grant's Hill," in Tolland. One married Rev. Dr. Buel, a native of Coventry, and Pastor of the church of Christ in Easthampton, Long Island. And one married Rev. Nathan Strong, the first, long continued, and faithful Pastor of this church. The descendants of Mr. Meacham were numerous and quite respectable. Twelve, or more, have either been consecrated to the work of the gospel ministry, or the companions of ministers. The ministerial line of his descent is still continued. A descendant of Mr. Meacham of the fifth generation, son of Rev. David L. Perry of Sharon, grandson of Dr. Strong of Hartford, and great-grandson of Rev. Mr. Strong of this place, a few years since died at Ceylon a Missionary of the A. B. C. F. M.

At this late period we cannot speak with definiteness of the particular traits of Mr. Meacham's character. He was evidently possessed of strong intellectual powers, and of a sound judgment. And he was an able divine. The tradition is, that his brethren in the ministry, when they were met by a disputatious skillful errorist, used to say; "We must put him into the hands of brother Meacham," thus expressing their confidence in his ability to conduct a theological discussion, and his success in reclaiming the heretical. He was truly evangelical in his views of God's revealed will. When, in his day, many Pastors of New England churches had embraced semi-arminian sentiments, and were hostile to the revival of religion then in operation, Mr. Meacham remained steadfast, and joyfully received the celebrated Whitefield into his pulpit. "The Rev. Gentlemen," says Trumbull, "who most favored the work in Connecticut, while others opposed with all their power, were Whitman of Hartford, Lockwood of Wethersfield, Joseph Meacham of Coventry, Lord of Norwich, Williams of Lebanon, Parsons of Lyme, Owin of Groton, Pomeroy of Hebron, and Wheelock of Lebanon Crank." He mentions eight other ministers residing in distant parts of the state.

And well might Mr. Meacham be one of the ministers of Connecticut, who favored "the great awakening;" for ere this, God had blessed in a signal manner his faithful ministrations of the gospel, and allowed him to witness remarkable displays of divine power and grace among the people of his charge.

In November 1736, President Edwards, writing to Dr. Coleman, says; "There was also the last spring and summer a wonderful work of God carried on in Coventry, under the ministry of Rev. Mr. Meacham. I had an opportunity to converse with some of the Coventry people, who gave me a very remarkable account of the surprising change which appeared in the most rude and vicious persons there." Before this season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, Mr. Meacham had been ordained about twenty years. Whether his labors had been specially blessed during that period, or whether his people shared largely in the revival of religion of 1740, 41 and 42, I am not informed. I suppose, however, that the spirit of God, was unusually manifested in this town at different periods, and particularly during "the great awakening." Mr. Meacham died, greatly lamented, September 13, 1752, in the 67th year of his age, and in the 40th year of his ministry. His funeral sermon was preached by Dr. Solomon Williams of Lebanon. What was said of a native of Coventry, Rev. Jonathan Lee, first Pastor of the church of Christ in Salisbury, may, if I mistake not, with truth be said of Mr. Meacham. "He was a man exactly fitted, by the force of his character, for the exigencies of a new settlement, to lay the foundations, and shape the forming character of society. Under his able ministry, and vigorous rule the elements of society grew up strong, healthy and compact, thoroughly New England; and beyond doubt, to his influence is to be attributed much of that manly and independent spirit, that intelligence and sagacity, that breadth and weight of character, by which our town has ever been characterized."

For thirty years after the settlement of this town there was but one church in it, and for twenty-five years but one



congregation. Most of the inhabitants worshipped in a building located not far from the present meeting house in the First Society. Deacon Ebenezer Kingsbury, who resided on the place now occupied by Mr. Erastus Kingsbury, for a number of years attended public worship at Bolton, and belonged to the church in that place; and it is probable, that others in the north-west part of the parish, and some in that part of the town now embraced in the parish of Andover, also worshipped at Bolton. The town of Bolton was incorporated in 1720, and Rev. Thomas White, the first minister, was ordained in 1725, eleven years after the ordination of Mr. Meacham. The church in Tolland was organized, and Rev. Stephen Steel, the first Pastor, was ordained in 1722. During eight years there was no place of worship for any of the inhabitants of Coventry so convenient as the one in their own town. To that sanctuary, from all parts of the town, they resorted, and together paid their vows to God. They were not conveyed thither in easy and elegant carriages, and in winter wrapped in furs, to meet a cheerful fire and cushioned seats on their arrival. Some rode on horse-back, while others walked. And among the pedestrians,—and those too from the borders of the town—were seen mothers and daughters.

Deprived in a great measure of conveyances and well wrought roads, the inconvenience of going so far on returning sabbaths and lecture days was soon felt by families residing in the west and north west part of the town; and the existence of another church and society was early contemplated. And the following occasioned a development of feeling in relation to a division of the town into two parishes. At a town meeting held January 26, 1735–36, the town voted to enlarge their meeting house. This vote called forth a protest from persons living in the west and north-west part of the town, which was recorded as follows:

At a meeting of the inhabitants of Coventry, January 26, 1735–36; “it being said to be voted, that they would make an addition to their meeting house in said town: we

the subscribers hereunto, inhabitants of said town, enter our caution and protest against said vote. Nathaniel Kingsbury, Jonathan Fowler, Noah Carpenter, Benjamin Carpenter, Joseph Long, Amos Richardson, Samuel Parker, Aaron Strong, Ebenezer Brown, John Fowler, Eliphalet Carpenter, George Hawkings, John Craw, Timothy Ladd, Thomas Adams, John Wilson, Samuel Porter, Noah Skinner, Nathaniel Woodward, Phineas Strong, Jonathan Shepherd, Noah Rust, Elijah Hammond, John Bissel, John French, Nathaniel Gilbert, James Hotchkins, Nathaniel Ladd, John Kingsbury, Samuel Lyman, Benjamin Jones, Jonathan Porter, Peter Scott, John Parker."

This protest informs us, who were originally embraced in the Second Society, and constituted the materials out of which this church and congregation were formed.

Arrangements for dividing the town into two parishes were amicably made. At a town meeting held February 23, 1735-36, the town voted as follows: . . . . "That when the Hon. General Assembly shall divide this town into two distinct societies, that the First Society shall reimburse to the Second Society, within eighteen months after they are set off, all the money that the inhabitants of the Second Society have paid towards the building an addition to, and repairing the meeting house above said, according as appears by the rate bills recorded; for to be improved in building a meeting house in the said new society, provided said society be set off within seven years from the date hereof. Then voted, that we give free and full consent, that there be a new society set off upon the north-west and west part of the town, at any time when the Hon. General Assembly shall think proper."

These votes, breathing a spirit so conciliatory, and prompted by such a regard for the principle of justice and the public good; are an honor to the town of Coventry, and as an adopted citizen of this town, I quote them with great pleasure. In this open, frank, equitable mode of procedure, in defiance of the claims of personal or sectional interests, we find something as noble as it is singular at the

present day. Future proceedings, in consummating this division of the town, though they were not entirely unanimous, were of the same conciliatory character as will appear from other votes passed by the town. . . . "At a legal town meeting held in Coventry, April 27, 1736: Then voted, that Joseph Strong Esq. and Capt. Samuel Parker should exhibit a prayer to the General Assembly, to have them [examine] votes passed by said town February 23, 1735-36, respecting a new society in said Coventry, to be confirmed and ratified." . . . "At a legal town meeting, adjourned from December 6, 1736, to this 13th day instant. Then voted, that they would help those people that live on the west side of the town to hire a minister to preach to them three months this winter. And Zachariah Boynton, one of the inhabitants of said Coventry, did upon that day, and in said meeting, dissent from the above vote." . . . "At a legal town meeting held in Coventry, December 27, 1736. Then voted, that they would raise one farthing on the pound to defray the charge of hiring a minister for *the woods people*, or the people who live on the westerly side of Coventry. Then voted, that the dwelling house of Noah Rust in Coventry should be the house for the minister to preach in three months this winter.\* And Mr. Zachariah Boynton, did on that day, and in the above mentioned meeting, dissent from the above said vote." . . . "At a legal town meeting held in Coventry, December 12, 1737; then voted, that they would do something to promote learning, by winter schooling, to the remote parts of the town. Then voted, to accept the return of the committee, that were appointed to select ground for a burying place in the west part of the town." The burying ground here referred to, is doubtless the one in the south-west part of the parish near the dwelling house of Mr. George N. Loomis.

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\* The dwelling house of Noah Rust, where a public altar was first erected to the worship of God in this parish, was located a few rods from the dwelling of Mr. John T. Thompson.



In 1740, by their agent Major Joseph Fowler, the town petitioned the General Assembly for a committee, to examine, and report on the expediency of the town's being divided. The committee was granted, and came out in August the same year, and the parish was incorporated in October 1740. The first society meeting was held December 4, 1740, and before five years had elapsed, the society had been assembled in legal society meetings thirty-one times. In laying the foundations of religious institutions here, our fathers were called to encounter many difficulties. Their number was small, as there were but between forty and fifty families within the limits of the society. They were subjected to all the inconveniences and deprivations incident to the settlement of a new country. They were, no doubt, quite straitened in their pecuniary circumstances. They had a meeting house to erect, and the preaching of the gospel to maintain; a church to gather, and Pastor to settle. They did not adjust their claims upon the First Society in relation to parsonage lands owned by the town, and money which they had advanced for repairing the meeting house in that parish, without some trouble. But the greatest trial which they were, at this time, called to endure, resulted from the attempt of some of their own number, commenced in 1743, and continued for a long period, to affect the organization of another society. After many years of severe conflict, the parish of Andover was incorporated, diminishing much the number and resources of this society.

Our indebtedness to our fathers, requires us to linger for a moment in contemplation of their condition, and efforts to secure for themselves and descendants the privileges of the gospel. Small in number as they were, especially after the society of Andover was incorporated; straitened as they must have been in pecuniary resources; and embarrassed in their proceedings as they were in more particulars than can now be enumerated; was there not in them an energy of character, a bold and determined resolution, an untiring perseverance, an attachment to the cause of Christ,

and a fear of God paramount to every other consideration, which their posterity would do well to imitate? Had our honored fathers been in active life at a later period, they might have been found among the bravest in the battle of Bunker Hill: or had their lot been cast in the time of a bloody persecution, they might have remained undaunted and cheerful in view of the torch and the gibbet.

For some years after the incorporation of the parish, public worship was continued at the dwelling house of Noah Rust, and the people were favored with preaching during the winter season; but who were the preachers I cannot learn. In 1744, Mr. Nathan Strong of Woodbury was invited to preach in view of a permanent settlement in this place.

Previous to this period there was a violent opposition to the "great awakening" then in progress, and those Pastors who were decidedly Calvinistic in their views of God's revealed will, evangelical in their preaching, self-denying and untiring in their efforts at home and abroad to promote and extend the revival of God's work; experienced no small measure of this hostile spirit. In May 1742, the Legislature of this State enacted a law prohibiting ministers from preaching and exhorting out of their respective parishes, unless they were invited by the minister, if there was no minister, by the church, and if there was no church, by the society within the limits of which the meeting or meetings were to be held. This enactment accounts for votes which our society passed June 21, 1742. "Then voted, that any of those ministers, whose names are under written, may preach or exhort at any time in this society upon invitation: viz., Mr. Meacham, Mr. Solomon Williams, Mr. Eleazer Williams, Mr. Wheelock, Mr. Bellamy, Mr. Pomeroy, Mr. Mills, Mr. Lockwood, Mr. Case, Mr. Judd, Mr. Buel, Mr. Davenport, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Marsh, Mr. Croswell, Mr. Fish, Mr. Edwards of Northampton, Mr. Mosely, Mr. Whitefield, Mr. Lord of Norwich, Mr. Lord of Preston, Mr. White, Mr. Steel, and Mr. Gilbert Tennent. Then voted, that any church member, or any head of a family, belong-

ing to this society, may invite any of the above ministers to preach in said society."

These votes are worthy of our consideration. It will be borne in mind, that they were passed two years after the incorporation of the society, before the organization of the church, and at a time (June 21st,) when probably no one was preaching in the parish; and that they were passed too by men, who had sat under the orthodox, spirit-stirring ministrations of Mr. Meacham, and who had, six years before, witnessed, if not experienced, those wonderful displays of divine power and grace, which were made in this town in 1736, and of which President Edwards speaks in his letter to Dr. Coleman. Within one month after the oppressive law of the Legislature was enacted, subjecting evangelical, and self-denying ministers to pains and penalties if they preached Christ and him crucified whenever called by the providence of God; our fathers assembled in society meetings, and by their action, and at once, removed all legal obstructions out of the way of certain ministers preaching at any time, and any where in this parish, when invited by a church member or head of a family. And what was the character of the ministers whom they selected, and thus favored? They were the very men, the severe enactment of the Legislature was designed to oppress. They were the men, who earnestly contended for the faith once delivered to the saints, while many of their ministerial brethren, and others were lax in sentiment, and apparently but a little interested in the progress of vital godliness. They were heavenly in their spirit, self-denying in their efforts to do good to the souls of men, and the honored instruments of promoting the revival of God's work. They were "the winnowed wheat" of Connecticut—men, who were willing to bear reproach and shame rather than make shipwreck of faith, withhold the pure gospel from their fellow men and thus offend God. Among them were the immortal Edwards, and his honored father; the matchless Whitefield and the half celestial Tennent, the deep-toned Bellamy, and his spirit-stirring coadjutors, Wheelock and Pomeroy,



Mr. Meacham and his ministerial associates in this vicinity. In making the selection, our fathers went over the State and prepared the way before all those ministers on whom odium and reproach had been cast on account of their orthodox and evangelical labors. They of whom this church was about to be formed, had enjoyed the faithful ministrations of God's word; they had drank deep at the fountain of truth; they had been baptized of the Holy Ghost; and they loved sound doctrine, and were satisfied with naught but deep, experimental religion. They desired to have those doctrines preached which put an undivided sceptre into the hand of the Almighty, and prostrate men before their Maker. The system of God's revealed will, embodied in the Assembly's Catechism, was the faith which they, who were to constitute this church, had understandingly embraced, and which they held fast through life. And theirs, we believe, was the faith once delivered to the saints; the faith of martyrs; the faith which gives permanency to Christian character; the faith which inspires hope and peace in seasons of darkness, and periods of trial; and the faith, which, when clearly and prayerfully exhibited, God has ever blessed to the temporal and eternal good of men. And when this church, by a spirit of conformity to the world, or of vain speculation, shall be led to reject the doctrines originally embodied in their articles of belief; when a deep solicitude for the truth in its native simplicity and purity, and for sound experimental religion, such as was at first manifested, shall cease; then will a dark and lowering cloud rest on our Zion; then will her ways mourn because none come to her solemn feasts; and then will her glory have departed.

Allusions have been made to difficulties, which were encountered in here establishing the ministry of the gospel. The building of the first meeting house occasioned much trouble. In regard to it the Legislature was repeatedly memorialized. The parish was once and again surveyed to ascertain its center. A legislative committee was employed to determine the site, and it was finally located a few rods

west of the place where we are assembled. It was forty-five feet in length, and forty in breadth, two years in building, and never finished. It was first occupied as a place of public worship in 1744.

Soon after the meeting house was in a condition to accommodate the congregation, Mr. Strong commenced preaching here as a candidate for settlement. He was the son of Elnathan Strong of Woodbury. Elnathan was born in 1686, and died in middle life, leaving a young family. The father of Elnathan was Thomas Strong, the fourth child of Elder John Strong, who died at Northampton, April 4, 1699, at the age of 94. Mr. Nathan Strong graduated at Yale College in 1742, and studied divinity with Rev. John Graham, Pastor of the church of Christ in Southbury. He commenced preaching somewhat advanced in life, and after a probation here of about two months, the society extended to him an invitation to settle with them in the ministry of the gospel. This invitation was given the 8th of February 1745. There was then such a fluctuation in the currency, and money had so depreciated, that it was extremely difficult to agree on a definite amount, as a permanent amount for the support of Mr. Strong; and I have not been enabled to determine what was the real value of the sum finally agreed upon. The society promised him £600 old tenor bills as a settlement; and this was to be paid from the avails of parsonage lands rented to Christopher West for 999 years: and they promised to pay him £200 old tenor bills as an annual salary, and to increase that sum till it amounted, within five years, to £270. And this sum was to vary according to the change in the value of produce. Wheat was then worth, £0: 16s: 0d a bushel, rye 0: 12: 0, corn 0: 8: 0, oats 0: 5: 0, beef a pound 0: 0: 8, wool 0: 5: 0, and flax 0: 2: 6.

Samuel Rust, Nathaniel Gilbert, and Eliphalet Carpenter were the committee to unite with Mr. Strong in selecting a council and fixing on the time for his ordination. And the day agreed upon was the 9th of October 1745, *one hundred years ago*. And where are now the actors in that solemn

scene ? And where shall we be, ere another hundred years have passed away ? Shall the church, the fruit of our father's toils, and prayers, and tears, the purchase of a Saviour's blood, then live ? May he, who bows the heavens, puts darkness under his feet, and rides on the wings of the wind, preserve this church in greater strength, and in the freshness and beauty of youth till the final consummation.

In this narrative of events, we are now brought to the period and transactions, which we are assembled more especially to commemorate. And we will now, in contemplation, mingle in the scenes of that occasion.

On the south of us is uncultivated land, covered in part with heavy and in part with light wood. On the north of us is an extended, dense, dark forest ; and on the southern border of this forest is found the sanctuary which was erected after so many struggling efforts. It is covered with riven oak clabboards and cedar shingles, the lower story only glazed ; and it stands solitary, with no dwelling nearer than Noah Rust's on the west, and Solomon Grant's on the east. On entering from the south this temple of God, we find the lower floor only laid, with the entire frame above the sleepers uncovered within. On the right and left hand of the aisle seats are arranged, running through the western, and also through the eastern section of the house. And we observe females occupying those on the right, and males those on the left. The assembly are in silent meditation and prayer, and thus waiting the approach of the much respected council. The council had convened the day previous, and with due care and solemnity organized the church, witnessed the election of Thomas Adams and Joseph Long to the office of deacons, and examined the Pastor elect. As they come to the threshold of the sanctuary, led on by father Meacham, the preacher, and the Pastor elect, the assembly all rise and remain standing until the council are seated. If we mistake not, we find the clerical part of the council composed of Rev. Messrs. Meacham of the First Church, Williams of Mansfield, White of



Bolton, Steel of Tolland, Williams of Lebanon, Wheelock of Lebanon Crank, Pomeroy of Hebron, Buel of Easthampton, Long Island, and Graham of Southbury. All of them are in the vigor of life, the eldest, Mr. Meacham, in the 60th year of his age. All, notwithstanding the great defection of the times in religious sentiment and vital godliness, are sound divines, evangelical and able preachers, ardently engaged in the revival of God's work, and sympathizing in doctrine with Edwards and Bellamy; and four of them—Williams of Lebanon, Wheelock, Pomeroy and Buel, are destined to hold conspicuous places in the ecclesiastical history of New England, and to be distinguished with literary honors. Wigs, bands, and dark attire inform the assembly, who of the council have been consecrated to the work of the gospel ministry, will conduct the services of the present occasion, and impose the hands of the presbytery on the head of the future Pastor of the new formed church.

As we cannot in contemplation attend to all the exercises of this ordination, we will pass by what precedes, and listen to some of the remarks of Mr. Graham, addressed to the Pastor elect, his former pupil; and also to some counsels addressed to the church and congregation.

“My Rev. and dear Brother,—Let holy Paul's determination settle on your heart, to know nothing among your people but Jesus Christ and him crucified. O let a *crucified* Christ be the very soul and centre of your study and preaching; here, here is the most noble and divine subject your soul can spend itself upon. Here you will find the sweetest employment for every one of your rational powers. Here are discovered the very secrets which lay hid in the counsels of God from the morning of eternity; the light thereof shining into the heart, leaves a stamp of divine glory on the soul. If you would render study sweet, or desire to dwell forever in the midst of spiritual and divine comforts, then never think you have studied sufficient on truth, till you have really learned it, and had it exemplified in your own heart; and the deeper you dive here, the higher the springs of divine comfort will rise, and the streams thereof more abundantly flow into your soul. In a word, as you would desire to live a life of hidden communion with God; as even you would preach *experimentally*, and so profitably and successfully to your people; and you would have

all your natural and acquired endowments ennobled, elevated, strengthened, and sanctified to the good of the church; and as you would maintain a comfortable assurance of your inward calling to this blessed work, labor to grow in grace and in knowledge. This is God's seal, *en pnumati*, without which the call of the people, and the hands of the clergy are but *en malani*—ink and paper."

"To this flock of Christ," observes Mr. Graham, "I would say, receive this our brother as a messenger of the Lord of hosts, as a real minister of Jesus Christ. 1. In your hearts and affections honor him highly for his work's sake. 2. Express your affection for him by speaking kindly, and honorably of him, defending his character against the sharp razors of reproachful tongues. 3. In all your conduct carry dutifully to him as a father, not despising his youth. 4. Submit yourselves to all his ministerial dispensations."

"To conclude this—Let me beseech you as a dying man, that to most of you I never spoke before, and probably shall never speak to you again; or see you any more till we all come to stand before the dread tribunal of Jesus Christ, to think seriously of these things, and allow them the proper influence on your hearts. Do not for the Lord's sake put them off with this—The preacher is carnal and dead. Let that be as it will. It is a very small matter with me, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord. . . . If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies; fulfil ye my joy by turning to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. . . . O hasten, hasten back, dear lambs, into the fold where you have heard and known Christ's voice, and gone in and out and found pasture. Nay, I solemnly warn and charge you, in the name of my blessed Lord, to hasten back to the Shepherd's tents, where Christ feedeth his flock; otherwise God will raise a storm in his anger, that will surprisingly drive you back with trembling and consternation of soul. May God prevent you with his mercy, and be better to you than our fears."

One year after his ordination, October 12, 1746, Mr. Strong and Miss Esther Meacham were joined in marriage. They had six children. The eldest, a son, died in infancy. The second son, Nathan, was the late Dr. Strong of Hartford; and the third son, Joseph, was the late Dr. Strong of Norwich. Two daughters, adults, unmarried, died before either of their parents. And the third daughter, Anna, married Doctor Ebenezer Hunt, a physician of this place, and died November, 1833, aged 74 years. Mrs. Strong died

October 19, 1793, in the 68th year of her age. Her funeral sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. Huntington, of the First Society, who represented her as sustaining a character unusually lovely.

It is to be much regretted, that no catalogue of members, or records of the church's actions, during the first fifty-three years of its existence, have come down to us. The small amount of information to be communicated respecting our ecclesiastical history, from the year 1745 to that of 1798, has been derived principally from the records of the Society, and from the remembrances of aged persons of the congregation.

The tenor of Mr. Strong's ministry was, upon the whole, an even course, though he was not exempt from the trials incident to his profession. After the unfavorable termination of the "great awakening," some more than an hundred years ago, revivals of religion were quite unfrequent, till about the commencement of the present century. This church, like others, during that long season of darkness, was perpetuated by now and then a small accession of members. There was, however, during the ministry of Mr. Strong, two, if not more, seasons of the special revival of God's work. In the year 1765, there was a revival of religion, to what extent I have not been able to ascertain, except as it was denominated, "*a remarkable work.*" Sixteen years after the first, in 1781, there was another revival, which brought to the church an accession of about fifty members. Many of the aged of the church, who have departed this life within some ten or fifteen years past, were hopeful subjects of that work, and spoke of it with great interest till their death. Only one person, (Widow Dan Loomis) remains, who united with the church while under the pastoral care of Mr. Strong. At no period, while the first Pastor labored here, did the church much exceed one hundred in number, probably most of the time it fell short of that amount, though the population of the parish for many years was as large or larger than it is at the present time. "The half-way covenant," as it was called, was



early introduced here, and was continued in practice till September, 1798. Persons of fair moral character and orderly lives, though they did not profess to have experienced the converting grace of God, on assenting to the covenant, were allowed the privilege of having their children baptized. The consequence was, that while the number of those who were "in full communion" was small, many had the seal of the covenant applied to their households.

Though this parish was never rent asunder by contending sects, or greatly agitated by internal commotions, yet from an early period there have been here those who were of different persuasions. In the year 1751, John Scripture and Jonathan Shepherd, were exonerated by vote of the society, from paying their society tax, because they were in sentiment, of the Baptist denomination. The bond of peace between persons of different sects, has been preserved to an unusual degree. There were, however, some contentions in the society in early times; but they were not of long continuance, or of very disastrous consequences. The arrangements in reference to Mr. Strong's salary, were well calculated to affect the harmony of the community. Annually, for many years, a committee was appointed to agree with the Pastor respecting the value of produce, on which his support was based; or in the language of the record,—*"to settle the speaces with Mr. Strong."* At one time, differences between the Society and Pastor were referred to disinterested persons, out of the parish, for adjudication. At another time the Society, in a state of excitement, voted to appropriate £50 of Mr. Strong's salary to employ another preacher, and appointed a committee to select and contract with the person; but this rash step was soon retraced, and the storm soon passed away. At another time there was a disagreement among the singers, and in a society meeting a vote was passed and recorded, "That singing in the congregation should be regulated according to rule." And at another time also, the harmony between the Pastor and the singers, was disturbed by the introduction of a new style of music. Mr. Strong could not endure such music in the

house of God, and interposed his authority to prevent it, which occasioned, for a short period, an unhappy state of things. A few years before the first Pastor's death, the subject of improving the house of worship was much agitated. Some were in favor of repairing the old building, and others were desirous of erecting a new house. The Society were repeatedly called together in relation to this matter. Mr. Strong judged it best for the Society to build a new house, and he himself planned the pulpit. And when, in accordance with his advice, it was determined to erect a new edifice, there was a division of sentiment in reference to its location. The County Court was unsuccessfully employed in fixing its location. Then a committee of the Legislature was convened for the same purpose. And finally, after some years of agitation, through the agency of Ephraim Kingsbury, Esq., Capt. Eliphaz Hunt, and Capt. Nathaniel Root, our present sanctuary was erected in 1792. The dedication sermon was preached by Rev. Nathan Strong, D. D. of Hartford.

Upon the whole, probably but very few uncompromising and faithful ministers of Christ, have spent half a century with their people in more peace and love, than did our revered Father with his flock. He was a man of strong intellectual powers, and of great decision of character. He was not rash in judgment, nor easily driven from his purpose, nor dismayed by opposition. He was a plain, sound, instructive preacher; but never, to my knowledge, committed any of his productions to the press, except a sermon delivered at Hartford when his son, Nathan, was ordained, and a charge given at Norwich, when his son, Joseph, was settled. The late Dr. Emmons, of Franklin, Mass., in a letter written not long before his death, said, "that he commenced the study of theology with Mr. Strong of Coventry, and under his instruction he became thoroughly indoctrinated in *Old School Divinity*." Mr. Strong was doubtless capable of indoctrinating such a pupil as Dr. Emmons. He was Puritanic in his views of divine truth, in his outward conduct, and in his practical piety. In intellectual and

acquired endowments, in sentiment and practice, he resembled his father-in-law, Mr. Meacham. By the grace of God, he was enabled so to plant and water this church, that amidst the vicissitudes of time, the corruptions of human nature, and the various and powerful assaults of the adversary, it has remained for one hundred years, and still remains on the immovable basis, the Rock Christ Jesus.

After the demise of Mrs. Strong, her husband did not preach, and he survived her but about two years. He died November 7, 1795, in the 79th year of his age, and in the 51st of his ministry, greatly beloved and respected. Dr. Williams, of Tolland, preached his funeral sermon.

The pulpit having become vacant some time before the decease of Mr. Strong, in consequence of his bodily infirmities, Mr. Ichabod Lord Skinner, of Marlborough, who graduated at Yale College in 1793, was invited to preach here as a candidate for settlement, and he was ordained colleague Pastor, October 23, 1794. Mr. Skinner was a man of quite respectable talents, and winning address. He sustained his pastoral relation to this church about four years, and, at his request, was honorably dismissed October 10, 1798. After this the church remained vacant for the space of two years and an half. In 1799 there was an unsuccessful attempt to settle Mr. Erastus Riply; as there was also in 1800, to settle Mr. Salmon King. God's work was revived under the labors of Mr. King, and the church received a considerable accession in numbers and strength.

In December 1800, the church, by an unanimous vote, and the society by a vote of sixty-four in the affirmative, and twelve in the negative, extended an invitation to become their Pastor, to Mr. Ephraim T. Woodruff, of Farmington, a graduate of Yale College in 1797, and a theological student of Dr. Charles Backus, of Somers. The Society offered Mr. Woodruff, as a pecuniary support, £200 settlement, and an annual salary of £120. Dea. Joseph Talcott, William Wilson, and Eleazer Pomeroy, acted as Committee of the Church on this occasion; and Ephraim Kingsbury, Esq., Capt. Eliphaz Hunt, and Capt. Nathaniel Root, as Commit-



tee of the Society. Mr. Woodruff was ordained Pastor of the Church, April 8, 1801, and Rev. Hezekiah Woodruff, of Stonington, preached the ordination sermon. The church then embraced one hundred and one members, thirty-eight males and sixty-three females.

No more fallacious principle can be adopted, than that of determining, in all cases, ministerial faithfulness and acceptableness to God by present apparent success. The application of this principle brings all the responsibility to rest on the ministers, and leaves none remaining on the churches. It recognizes not any thing as being favorable or unfavorable in the circumstances of a community, the country, or the age. It condemns many of the most laborious and self-sacrificing servants of Christ, as mere hirelings. It casts out, as unworthy of their high and holy calling, prophets and apostles; and it reproaches the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It was the application of this false principle, which brought great and lasting evils on the churches of New England in the days of *new-lightism*; and within the last twenty years, the disastrous consequences of a new application of the same principle, have been clearly seen and severely felt in some parts of our country.

Mr. Woodruff's ministry commenced at a period, and in circumstances unusually favorable to a successful continuance. It was just at the beginning of that series of revivals of religion, which continued, with increasing interest and rising glory, for more than thirty years; and which brought large accessions in number, strength, and benevolent action, to the churches in our country: and the generation of professed believers, then in active life, and exerting a leading influence, were eminently ministerial in their feelings and conduct. They acted on the principle, that the ministry of the gospel is in hostility with the depraved propensities of the human heart, and that they who faithfully preach the gospel, must be supported and defended. And God, in an unusual degree, blessed the labors of their Pastors to them and their children.

During the sixteen years of Mr. Woodruff's continuance here, one hundred and fifty were added to the church ; one hundred and thirty-four by profession, and sixteen by letter. Two seasons of special refreshing from the presence of the Lord were experienced. Referring to the revival of religion which occurred in 1808 and 1809, Mr. Woodruff says :— " During that harvest season, about seventy souls, by a public profession, were added to the Lord. Those who then named the name of Christ, with few exceptions, have apparently walked worthy of their high vocation." The other revival commenced in November, 1813, and an account of it is found in the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine, for January, 1814. It commenced among the young married people and youth, and, as it is stated in the published narrative ; " within a few weeks, it was known that about seventy minds had sustained an alarm, in different parts of the society, fifty of which seemed under the genuine work of the law, which we trust has done the office of a school-master to bring them to Christ. . . . On the first Sabbath in March, 1814, twenty-two young persons were admitted to the communion of the church. Twenty have been received into our number since. And in the judgment of charity, twelve or fourteen others, when they shall ask the privilege, will be deemed proper candidates for admission," In the published account of this revival of religion, if not a singular, an interesting fact is stated. After a season of unusual health, and of special spiritual prosperity, a sweeping pestilence passed over the place, and in a short time removed by death a number belonging to the church. Great peace and comfort attended them in their last hours. The supports of religion, and the blessed effects of the revival, in preparing them for departing this life, were strikingly manifested ; but distressing sickness, and often repeated deaths, checked the progress of God's work, and the revival was soon over.

There were years during the ministry of this Pastor, when the church received no accession, either by profession or letter ; but notwithstanding the many, who were recom-

mended to other churches, the church increased, and was left in a healthful and prosperous state. Mr. Woodruff was an affectionate, laborious, and faithful Pastor. He was the instrument of much good to this people, and is cherished in respectful and affectionate remembrance by those who were favored with his ministry. He was, at his request, honorably dismissed October 21, 1817.

After the dismissal of Mr. Woodruff, for one year the pulpit was supplied, most of the time, by Rev. Mr. Williams, then of Andover, Mr. Henry Robinson of Guilford, and Mr. William Kemball of New Hampshire.

The present Pastor commenced his labors here November 1, 1818, and was ordained March 10, 1819. The ordination services were performed by the following ministers. Introductory prayer by Mr. Nash of Tolland; sermon by Mr. Strong of Somers; consecrating prayer by Dr. Bassett of Hebron; charge by Mr. Brockway of Ellington; right hand of fellowship by Mr. Booth of the First church; address to the people by Mr. Loomis of Willington, and the concluding prayer by Mr. Ely of Vernon. The church then consisted of 142 members, 41 males, 101 females. The population of the parish was 840; 407 males and 433 females. Since March 10, 1819, 318 members have been added to the church, 248 by profession, and 70 by letters of recommendation. Within the same period, 284 have been removed from the church, 179 by letters of recommendation to other churches, 105 by death, and 9 otherwise. The present number of members is 176; 55 males, and 121 females. And the present population of the parish is about 750, having diminished 90 in 26 years.

Since the ordination of the present Pastor, some seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord have been enjoyed. In 1819, a revival commenced, which continued through a part of the year following, and which brought an accession to the church of 65. In 1822-23, the church was signally blessed, with an increase of about 70. In 1826, there was the descent of a gentle shower of grace, and a small accession to the church. In 1831, about 30 were



hopefully converted to God, and 'professed their faith in Christ; and in 1832 about the same number. Since that time there have been seasons, when the hearts of some of the community were moved, and their hopes much raised in view of a return of the special influence of the Holy Spirit; but no considerable ingathering of souls into the kingdom of Christ has been allotted. We know not but the gospel has been as abundantly, and as faithfully dispensed, and that there have been persons in the church, who as earnestly desired and as fervently prayed for the conversion of sinners, as at former periods. But, on account of our sins, God has seen fit to withhold from us the rich and abundant blessings of former years. We would not however despise the day of small things, but be grateful for what we have received; and pray, and labor, and hope for larger measures of grace. During the last thirteen years, 77 by letters and profession have united with the church; and the one last received, on profession of faith, was almost ninety years of age.

During its whole history, if a few years past are excepted, this church has been remarkably united in all ecclesiastical proceedings. Though alienations and animosities have occurred, perhaps as frequently as in other places, between individuals and families; yet when members were brought to act together in religious matters, they were agreed. They were one in faith, and one in their views of duty. For more than twenty-one years after the settlement of the present Pastor, seldom was there a dissenting voice to votes passed by the church. It is not known, that written articles of faith and a church covenant, were ever submitted to the church for their adoption, till October 15, 1819, when our present Articles of Faith and Covenant were unanimously adopted, without the expression of an objection. The course pursued by this church, from the beginning, in relation to those among us who are associated with other Christian denominations, has been such as to avoid bitter contentions. While members of this church have considered themselves severally bound by their covenant engagements

to stand by their own church and maintain their own institutions, they have also considered themselves bound by the law of love, to treat persons of other names with affection, and their rights with respect. While they have not supposed, that the congregating of families, possessing distinctive and separate interests, of different views and tastes, in the same dwelling, was the best method for securing peace and happiness; they have recognized the duty of acting in relation to other Christian sects, on the principles practiced by a good neighborhood.

Female influence, and in latter years, female influence associated, has contributed much to the peace and prosperity of this religious community. Besides the Foreign Missionary Associations, there are here three female societies for charitable purposes. The first, from the circumstances of its origin and long continuance, may be deemed worthy of more than a passing notice on this occasion. It was organized at the house of the late David Hale, Esq., in 1812, and denominated, "*The Coventry Female Friendly Society*," and embraced members from both parishes. Mrs. Lydia Hale was the first President, Mrs. Sally Woodruff, Secretary, and Miss Sally Root, Treasurer. The object of the society was to promote the personal piety of its members, and contribute to benevolent enterprises. A small library of books, well adapted to aid in the advancement of experimental religion, was soon collected. The meetings of the society were held once in three months, and were occupied with prayer, praise, reading, and conference. Among the males, who were accustomed to attend the meetings, address the members, and encourage them in their works of faith and labors of love, were Hon. Jesse Root, David Hale, Esq., and the elder Dea. Talcott. In June, 1813, the society passed the following:—"Resolved, that we will spend the hour between three and four o'clock, on the first Monday in each month, in meditation, and prayer to God for the outpouring of his Spirit, the general revival of religion, and the universal spread of the gospel." Five months after this resolution was passed, a solemn stillness, and an undiverted

attention to the dispensation of the gospel, were manifested in the house of God ; and a company of young persons sent for their Pastor to instruct them in the way of life, while they were assembled in a social circle. The people, and the church, as a body, were surprised to learn, that God was in deed and in truth specially present here, reviving his work with great power. A somewhat similar occurrence took place in 1819. The revival of that year commenced in this society. For the furtherance of the object in view, and for the convenience of the members, the society was divided in 1816, and a separate organization was constituted in each parish. Of the original members belonging to this parish, four are remaining, six have died, and three have withdrawn. Of the forty-three, who have since united, thirteen have moved out of the place, fourteen have died, and six, residing here, have withdrawn. Many of those, who have departed this life, remained connected with this, one of the oldest female associations in the State, till they were taken to the general assembly of the church of the first born. And there are others, not in affluent circumstances, who have punctually attended the meetings, and paid their annual tax for thirty-three years. And it is expected that they, and others with them, will be thus associated, till the hand which breaks asunder all earthly ties shall separate them,—and separate them to be reunited in an association more intellectual, more benevolent, more enduring, and more glorious.

In 1824, another female association was formed, and denominated, "*The Fragment Society.*" The prominent design of this association is to aid the cause of benevolence by an annual tax, and by manual labor. They meet and labor together frequently, at each other's dwellings, usually attended by their Pastor. And the meetings of this society have had a conservative and happy influence on the community. This association is annually raising for the treasury of the Lord about fifty dollars.

In 1825, the late Harlan Page, a native of this place, and for a number of years a member of this church, organized



an association of the juvenile females of the congregation. This "*Juvenile Society*," by their labors, have contributed something commendable to charitable objects.

These three organized bodies have raised for the cause of benevolence, besides what has been contributed in aid of Foreign Missions by females, about \$1,400. And the average annual amount of the charities of the congregation, for twenty years past, will not vary much from \$400. Our fathers, who have recently left us for a better world, as we trust, seeing the pecuniary strength diminishing by deaths and other removals, with a commendable promptness and liberality, in 1824, established a parochial fund of \$5,000. The avails of this fund are now of great use to the society.

The first settlers of this town, like their Puritan Fathers, paid strict attention to the religious training of their children. A part of each Sabbath was devoted, by heads of families, to catechetical instruction. They intelligently adopted, and strenuously maintained the principle, at which ignorance and infidelity scoff, but which philosophy approves, and experience and revelation confirm; that mental cultivation should always be attended with moral instruction. As in higher seminaries of learning in New England, so in the primary schools of this parish, an intellectual and moral training have ever been combined. And God forbid, that they should ever be divorced. Let our noble school fund be sunk in the ocean; let our school houses be closed, and not again opened; let our academies cease to be frequented by youth; and let the time-worn walls of our colleges, which are now the glory of New England, fall, and their foundations be removed, rather than have religion separated from the education of the young. Education without religious training, will make men greater sinners, a curse to their species, and prepare them for a more fearful retribution. The Assembly's Catechism has been taught in our common schools for more than *one hundred years*—from the beginning to the present day.

The temperance reformation early gained the attention and secured the efforts of this church. In 1828 the church

passed resolutions, which were blessed to the general correction of some practices which were injurious to the cause of Christ, and the order and prosperity of the community. For many years, the united efforts, the zeal and energy here manifested, in this cause of celestial origin, were worthy of imitation.

July 10, 1845, the church passed the following resolution :—" Resolved, that we earnestly recommend to all the members of the church to adopt the principle of entire abstinence from all intoxicating drinks as a beverage." Whether this recommendation will be regarded by nearly all the members, remains to be decided.

For many years after public worship was established in this parish, the whole congregation rose, and while standing united, as far as they were able, in praising God ; the minister, or the clerk, lining the psalm or hymn. It has been the immemorial practice of communicants at this table of the Lord, male and female, after receiving the sacramental elements, to come to the deacon's seat, and deposit their contributions. These contributions, after defraying the expenses of the table, have been appropriated to the aid of the poor of the church and other charitable objects.

There have been twelve Deacons of this church since its organization :—Thomas Adams, Joseph Long, Phineas Strong, Ebenezer Kingsbury, Jesse Cook, Nathaniel Eells, Joseph Talcott, Jesse Cook, Arad Talcott, Selah Loomis, Willard Hutchison, and Joseph Talcott.

The following preachers of the gospel were either members of this church, or natives of this parish :—Rev. Nathan Strong, D. D., Joseph Strong, D. D., Messrs. Thomas Page, Ebenezer Kingsbury, Gershom E. Lyman, Horatio Waldo, Jacob Allen, Clement Parker, Hervey Talcott, Eber Carpenter, Addison Kingsbury, John A. Woodruff, Marvin Root, Nathan S. Hunt, Diodatus Babcock, Episcopalian, Samuel Post, Methodist, and Mr. Erwin Page.

Besides most of those already mentioned as connected with the learned professions, of our citizens, Elisha Smith, Ephraim Kingsbury, Eleazer P. Talcott, and Henry Pome-

roy, have received the honors of college. Also Edwin Wright, a native of this place.

In the practice of medicine we have retained the services of the following gentlemen :—Timothy Kimball, Elijah Lyman, John Waldo, Joseph Waldo, Daniel Avery, Ebenezer Hunt, and Eleazer Hunt. Here originated Drs. Silas Loomis, Lucius Abbot, Erastus Jones, Sanford Bissel, John B. Porter, Uriel Richardson, and Ebenezer K. Hunt.

No person while engaged in the profession of law, has been a resident of this place ; and but three lawyers, Hezekiah Woodruff, John P. Abbot, and Samuel Woodruff, have looked back to North Coventry as the place of their nativity.

In concluding this discourse, what shall we say of our ancestors and their works ? With devout thanksgiving and praise to their God and our God, we will say ; they were faithful to their trust unto the death, and their works do follow them. The blessed influence of that little church, which they with so much care planted, and of the ministry of the gospel, which they with so many embarrassments established here in the wilderness one hundred years ago, has been felt by succeeding generations, and it is still experienced. The young by it have been enlightened, restrained, guided, sanctified, and prepared to meet the conflicts and responsibilities of matured life. Families have been rendered more peaceful and happy ; the community more intelligent, enterprising, orderly, and prosperous. The various ills of life, and the appalling scenes of death, have been met with more fortitude, and cheerfulness. And many here have been led to fight the good fight of faith, who are now engaged in an uninterrupted and undying celebration of a Saviour's love.

It has been the allotment of God's providence, that this church should give of their members to other churches more than they have received of them in return. From this church persons have gone to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south ; to different and distant States ; and they have carried with them a measure of the spirit of our



fathers, and of the apostles, with which they have blessed the regions where they have dwelt. One church in the great valley of the west has received its type from this humble, obscure organization. God blessed our fathers, he has blessed their descendants, and he has caused their self-denying attempts to serve him to be a blessing to the world.

And what will be the future history of this church and people? At the close of another century, what will be the condition of those institutions which our fathers planted and watered with such assiduous care and so many prayers? Nature then will exhibit her varied forms as now; but who then will be here, and what will be here? The days in which we live are portentous of great and disastrous events. Convulsions follow convulsion. Amidst the contentions and commotions which agitate to the centre all institutions, shall the church live and flourish another century? Shall the now unborn assembly on the 9th day of October 1945, commemorate with pious love and reverence the virtues and deeds of their ancestors of the 18th century? We entertain no fears for the church universal. She shall live till centuries have all passed away. Her light shall be as the light of seven days. But shall this branch of the church universal—shall the constellation of churches in this region, with which this has been so long and so happily connected, live? The history of apostolical, reformed and of many Puritan churches admonish us, that God may remove the candlesticks out of their place, and suffer thick and long continued darkness to come over the region of our father's sepulchres.

There must be a fixedness of principle, a tenderness of conscience, and the fear of God—there must be self-denying effort, liberal charity, the strengthening of the things which remain, and earnest prayer; or these churches will be stopped in their descent through succeeding generations to bless and save from eternal death the children of men. And who would be the criminal cause of terminating, or interrupting this line of descent? Who, by his hostility, or neglect of duty would assume the responsibility of de-

stroying, or weakening a church which was purchased with the blood of the Son of God, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and in which the Deity had dwelt for one hundred years? Oh, let this, and her sister churches be gently and prosperously wafted down the stream of time till she rides majestically on the sea of glory.

Brethren in Christ Jesus, we are about to hand over the weighty and sacred trust committed to our care to the guardianship of our descendants. God grant that they may be prepared to receive, duly estimate, rightly improve, and long perpetuate the precious inheritance. What is before us in life, the opening leaves of Providence will soon disclose. We ask for the conversion and salvation of our children. We ask for Zion's prosperity. We ask for grace which shall enable us to meet all the exigencies of life and of death. We ask for heaven. We ask no more.





## APPENDIX.

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### A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE SIGNERS OF THE PROTEST INSERTED ON PAGE 13TH.\*

*Nathaniel Kingsbury* emigrated from Norwich to Coventry about the year 1714. He settled on the farm now owned by Mr. William Kingsbury of Andover. He was first to sign the protest against the town's action in relation to their meeting house; and two and a half years after the incorporation of this society, he was first to sign a petition to the General Assembly for the incorporation of the society of Andover. He, and others residing in that part of Coventry, which is embraced in the parish of Andover, as circumstances indicate, were dissatisfied with the location of the meeting house in this society, and hence were induced to make strenuous, long continued, and finally successful efforts to effect a new organization. He died September 16, 1763 in the 80th year of his age. He was the father of fourteen children. John, who lived on the farm now owned by Mr. Lester Brewster, afterwards removed to Enfield and was drowned while attempting to pass over the Connecticut river in a boat, Nathaniel, Mary who was the wife of Elijah Hammond, Simeon, Jabez, Hannah, Priscilla who married Dea. Ebenezer Kingsbury, Joseph, Denison, Lemuel, Jeremiah who died in early life, Sarah, Phineas, and Ruth who died aged 14 years.

*Elijah Hammond* emigrated from Marblehead, Mass. to Coventry in 1730, or in 1732. He first settled on the farm now occupied by Messrs. Wheeler and Shepherd, formerly denominated, the Risley and more recently the Tarbox place, where he lived till 1752, when he removed to Bolton, and there died about 1800, in the 90th year of his age. He had three children; Nathaniel, Hannah, and Priscilla.

*John French* occupied a tract of land a short distance east of Rev. Rodolphus Landfear's. It is not known from what place, or at what period he emigrated to Coventry. In 1736 he was married to Mehitabel, daughter of Thomas Root, Deacon of the First Church. He removed to Wapping, a parish in South Windsor, where he died. He had at least two children, Aaron and Nathan.

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\*For the materials of this Account I am much indebted to Rev. Marvin Root, who has collected many and valuable facts connected with the history of this town, the preservation of which should be secured.

*Nathaniel Ladd* was one of those, who signed the protest, but in the division of the town he was set to the First Society. His residence was a short distance west of Mr. Stephen Dunham's. Two gentlemen of this name early settled in this parish. The other lived on the south not far from the dwelling of Capt. Silas Jones.

*Jonathan Fowler* emigrated from Lebanon and settled on the farm now owned by Mr. William C. Hunt in 1726. He was a giant, and became renowned by his feats of muscular strength. Alone, and without a weapon of defence, he was met and attacked by a bear. The combatants closed in with each other, and Mr. Fowler laid his antagonist dead at his feet. A representation of this conflict, and victory is exhibited in one of the museums of London. He died in 1756, about 60 years of age, leaving a son and daughter, Joel and Tabitha.

*Eliphalet Carpenter* was born at Northampton, Mass., October 1703. His father, Benjamin Carpenter, emigrated from Rehoboth to Northampton, and thence to this town where he died, leaving six sons, Eliphalet, Noah, Amos, Jedediah, Ebenezer, and Benjamin. Eliphalet, in 1726, settled on the farm now owned by his grand-son, Ralph Carpenter, Esq. He was the first clerk of this society, and was for many years much employed in managing its concerns.

*Noah Carpenter*, son of Benjamin, was born at Northampton in 1705. He settled in the north-west part of the town, near the line of Tolland, and the house which he occupied and which was afterwards consumed by fire, was situated not far from that now owned by Mr. Chester Baker on the road to Tolland. His sons were Abner, Ezra, Israel and Benjamin.

*Benjamin Carpenter* was brother of Noah, and was born October 1695. In 1724 or in 1725 he settled on a lot of land lying between Mr. Isaac Kenney's and the west school house. He had nine sons, Benjamin, Jonathan, Elijah, Levi, Reuben, (grand father of Rev. Eber Carpenter,) Joseph, Dan, Jesse and Comfort.

*John Crow* emigrated from Killingworth and probably settled somewhere in the parish of Andover.

*John Hawkins* came from Preston, and settled on the farm now owned by Mr. Eliezer Hatch. He early sold his place to Benjamin Lamb. He had two sons and two daughters. One daughter married Lemuel Parker, and the other James Edwards. The names of his sons were John and George.

*John Parker* emigrated from Stonington, and occupied the farm now owned by Capt. Flavel Case. He was son of Samuel Parker, Deacon of the First Church.

*Peter Scott* was from Franklin, and was the first occupant of the farm now owned by Mr. Jabez Kingsbury. In 1761 he sold his place to Ephraim Kingsbury Esq., and returned to Franklin.

*Noah Skinner* settled on the place now occupied by Mr. Daniel Usher. He had one son, Noah Skinner, jun.

*Amos Richardson* married Rachel Yarrington of Long Island, and emigrated from Stonington to Coventry in 1717. At that period there was no house in the east school district, and but one within the present limits of the

parish. He settled on the farm now owned by one of his descendants of the fourth generation, Levi Sweetland, Esq. He had twelve children, among whom were Amos, Stephen, Justus, Nathan and Jonathan.

*Samuel Lyman* emigrated from Northampton Mass., first to Lebanon, then to Coventry. He was one of the earliest settlers in this parish, and settled on the place now owned by Mr. Chester Talcott, and there erected the second house which was built in the east school district. He had one son Samuel, and four daughters. Eunice the wife of Joseph Talcott, Elizabeth the wife of Benjamin Talcott, Dorcas the wife of Ezekiel Alcott, and Desire the wife of a Mr. Strong.

*Jonathan Porter* was the son of Thomas Porter, the second town clerk. The Porter family came from Hebron, and located themselves in the First Society on the place now occupied by John W. Boynton, Esq. In 1725, Jonathan removed to the lot of land now owned by Mr. Warren Fitch, and denominated, the Deacon Porter place. He died in 1790. He had seven children, Thomas, Jonathan, Isaiah, Noah, Sarah, Mary and Phebe.

*John Wilson* was the first settler on the farm now owned by Mr. Ebenezer Hunt. Among his children was Capt. William Wilson who died in this place in 1819, aged 90 years.

*Ebenezer Brown* emigrated from Rehoboth Mass., and settled on the farm now in possession of Deacon Joseph Talcott. His house was on the division line between the parishes, and was by the act of incorporation set to the Second Society. Among his children were Ebenezer, Timothy and Sarah.

*Samuel Porter* came to Coventry from Windsor. He occupied the farm now possessed by Mr. Simon Gager, and was grand-father to Mrs. Gager. He had ten children, six sons and four daughters. His sons were, Samuel, James, Gideon, Nathan, Abel, and one who died young. His daughters were Chloe, Sarah, Anna and Mary.

*Thomas Adams* was elected Deacon of the church at the time of its organization, and honored his office. He lived a short distance west of Mr. Higgenbothan's grist mill. It is not known that he left any descendants in the town, and but little is known respecting him.

*Nathaniel Woodward* originated in Roxbury, Mass. He lived a short time in Wethersfield, and from that town came to Coventry, and settled near the north-east school house, on the farm which has ever since been possessed by his descendants of the same name. He was moderator in 1740 when this ecclesiastical society was organized. Late in life he removed to Stafford where he died. He had two sons, Nathaniel and Aaron.

*Jonathan Shepherd* occupied the farm now owned by Mr. J. P. Walker. He early associated himself with the Baptist denomination. He had one son, Colo, and two daughters, Prudence the wife of John Ladd, and Anna.

*Joseph Long* was from Hartford, and was elected Deacon at the time of the church's organization. He sustained this office in an acceptable manner for many years, and died in a good old age. He resided not far from the dwelling occupied by the late Mr. Oliver Long.

*Phineas Strong* the son of Joseph Strong Esq., and grand-son of Thomas Strong was born in Northampton, Mass. With his father he emigrated to



Coventry in 1717. In Nov. 1724 he was married to Mary, daughter of Dea. Samuel Parker of the First Society. He succeeded Deacon Thomas Adams, and officiated in the office of Deacon for many years. He was a Justice of the Peace, and was much employed in ecclesiastical and civil matters. He lived on the ground now occupied by Mr. Tracy Loomis. The names of his children were, Phineas, Mary, Sarah, Azulah, Ozias, Jerusha, Irene, Elisha, Elijah, Beulah and Hannah. Azulah married Thomas Page, and was the mother of the late Capt. Gad Page.

*Aaron Strong* belonged to the family of Strong's, who emigrated from Northampton, and settled on the east side of the road north of Deacon Willard Hutchison's. A man of the same name, afterwards, lived in Bolton.

*Benjamin Jones* came from Northampton and settled on the farm now occupied by Mr. Willard Loomis of Andover. His descendants in Coventry are numerous.

*Samuel Parker* was son of Deacon Samuel Parker, and brother of John Parker. He lived within the bounds of Andover.

*Nathaniel Gilbert* was moderator of a society meeting, June 21, 1742, when the society authorized members of the church, and heads of families to invite certain ministers to preach in this parish. As we do not find his name on our records but a short time after this period, it is inferred that he was one of the petitioners for a new society and resided in Andover.

*James Hotchkis* probably lived in Andover. I cannot learn any thing respecting him.

*John Bissel* emigrated from Lebanon in 1716, and settled on the farm now in the possession of Capt. Silas Jones. He was the first settler in the parish, and Capt. Jones' farm was the first which yielded to the efforts of the cultivator. He possessed a large estate, had two daughters; one married Jonathan, and the other married Israel Fowler.

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## THE CELEBRATION.

### *From the New England Puritan.*

One hundred years having elapsed since the formation of the Church in North Coventry, Ct., that event was commemorated by public religious services, agreeably to previous arrangements, on Thursday, October 9th. Notwithstanding the heavy rain in the former part of the day, a large congregation assembled at the meeting-house at 11 o'clock. Numbers were present from neighboring parishes, and some from distant places in the State and country. Great interest was evidently felt in the occasion, and in the transactions of the day.

First, the Divine blessing was invoked by Rev. Dr. Nott, of Franklin, now in the 92d year of his age, and in the 65th of his ministry. Then, portions of the Scriptures were read by Rev. Chauncey Booth, of South Coventry, and

the choir sung the 121st Psalm, P. M., "Upward I lift my eyes," &c., in old Lenox. After prayer, in which the congregation were led by Mr. Booth, the following Hymn, composed by Rev. J. Lee, of Salisbury, was sung in China :

"Our fathers' God, our thanks we pay  
That here thy church arose ;  
To share thy love, and own thy sway,  
Secure from all her foes ;  
That church has seen a century's flight,  
While kingdoms rose and fell,  
And though their thrones are sunk in night,  
She lives thy power to tell.

Her table in the wilderness  
By thy kind hand was spread,  
With heavenly food her sons to bless,  
As Israel's tribes were fed ;  
And in affliction's darkest day  
Her shepherd, as of old,  
Led on the flock in his right way,  
And guarded well the fold.

Our fathers' God, their children own,  
Nor frown us from thy face ;  
Look down and bless us from thy throne,  
And show thy power and grace ;  
And though in dust we soon shall dwell,  
Still bless thy heritage,  
That sons to sons thy love may tell  
Through every coming age."

This was succeeded by an Historical Address by Rev. G. A. Calhoun, who has been pastor over this church for 26 years. About the middle of his address the speaker rested, while the choir sung the 18th Psalm, C. M., by Sternhold and Hopkins, "The Lord descended from above," &c., in Majesty. After prayer, by Rev. J. Allen, of Sterling, formerly a member of the church in North Coventry, the 78th Psalm, C. M., in Rouse's version, "Attend my people, to my law," &c., was sung.

A short recess was then had, when the numerous professed Christians present, united in observing the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. First, the 262d Hymn in Dwight's selection, "On Jordan's rugged banks I stand, &c." was sung in the tune of old Jordan. The ordinance was administered by Rev. Dr. Nott, and by Rev. H. Talcott, of Portland, Ct., and addresses were made by Rev. A. Collins, of Preston City, and Rev. E. Carpenter, of Southbridge, Mass. Messrs. Talcott and Carpenter, were formerly connected with the church in North Coventry. The communicants sung the Hymn, "'Twas on that dark, that doleful night, &c." And after the addresses the choir sung as

a Doxology, two stanzas of the Hymn, "All hail the power of Jesus' name, &c.," in New Jerusalem. The closing benediction was pronounced by Rev. Dr. Nott.

I have referred so particularly to the singing, because it added so much to the interest of the occasion, and was so prominent a part of the transactions. Among the choir were a number considerably advanced in years, some of whom had occupied the singers' seats twenty-five, thirty, and even forty years ago. Voices of the aged and of the young united in the delightful harmony, and with great animation and effect, sung the ancient songs of Zion, in the tunes which aided the devotions of the last generation,—of our fathers now reposing in the grave, or rather, as we trust, singing the praises of God and the Lamb on golden harps in the temple of God above.

After the public religious services, the congregation were invited to repair to the Conference house and Academy near, to partake of a collation there prepared. A great variety and abundance of food was provided; many articles of which,—together with the style in which it was served,—reminded us of olden times. At the head of one of the tables was seated the venerable patriarch before mentioned, by whom the Divine blessing was asked. He was furnished with a pewter platter, which once belonged to Rev. Samson Occum, the celebrated Indian preacher, and also with a napkin, made one hundred and fifty years ago, by a lady in Boston, who has been dead more than a century. Much of the furniture of the table was of pewter, such as our mother's used; and cake was served, made from a receipt used a century ago; nor was "bean porridge," the favorite dish of our ancestors, wanting.

In the evening there was also a public religious meeting. Prayer was offered by Rev. Mr. Potter, former missionary of the A. B. C. F. M., among the Cherokees, now employed as agent of the Board in Tennessee. A very appropriate discourse was delivered by Rev. J. Allen, from Ps. cxi.: 4; and the concluding prayer was offered by Rev. J. A. Woodruff, of Rock Island, Illinois, son of Rev. E. T. Woodruff, a former pastor of this church.

It is to be hoped that great and lasting good will result from this celebration. It must make the present generation cherish with more care the memory of their pious ancestors. It must render us more solicitous to transmit to future times the religious principles and privileges, which we have received from them.

A vote was passed, adjourning the meeting to Oct. 9th, 1945, a century hence. Who shall live, and what shall be, when that day shall arrive?







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